

PLAIN TRUTH

BY A

Handful of PLAIN MEN:

OR, A

SECOND CRT

FROM THE

C O U N T R Y.

Directed to the Very Reverend the
MODERATOR of the ensuing GE-
NERAL ASSEMBLY.



EDINBURGH,

Printed in the Year M.DCC.XXXV.



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Very Reverend Sir,

LAST Year we told you who we were, and what our Principles. We proposed our Difficulties to you, to which we had no Return; but now we understand you were taken up rescinding your own Acts, for which, as we, who are at a great Distance, hear, some of your Brethren, not far from you, give you very little Thanks; and much of your Time was spent in Disputing and Reasoning one against another. These, with other Things we are informed of, and too well know, give us such Pain, as that they have occasioned this our *second Cry* to you. But e'er we begin, we must tell you, That tho' we know nothing of *State Matters*, and are as little taken up in *Politicks*, yet we continue happy, in not a few worthy, sufficient and condescending *Ministers*, who grudge no Time nor Pains to instruct and inform us of what we know not; so that tho', in the after Part of this our *Address* to you, we mention History, and other Things you may think too high for poor *Countrymen*, yet impute not these to us, but to the Labours of our learned and godly *Ministers*. Allow us then, *very Reverend Sir,*

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First,

First, To cry to you, *Watchmen*, what of the Night? For we rejoice that our *Watchmen* are not blind, ignorant, dumb, sleeping, and loving to slumber; but that *Scotland's* covenanted GOD has given us *Watchmen* upon her Walls, who will not hold their Peace. May we not then cry to you, that tho', for Forty Years past, we have had a very clear Day of Gospel Light, with greater Peace than ever our Church or Land enjoyed without Interruption; yet, are we not threatned with our Night approaching? For is not Christ, and his glorious Gospel, in a frightful Manner slighted. What then can we look for, but that our House shall be left to us desolate? Do not Errors increase, and is not the good old Way forsaken, yea, our honest and upright *Ministers* tell us, That the Writings of those, who were Bulwarks of a *Protestant Interest*, and the Glory of our Land, are now laid aside with no small Measure of Contempt? Is not a just and holy GOD remarkably hiding his Face from us? What then shall our End be? Is not Impiety increasing, Apostacy of many of our Professors open, Hypocrisy manifest, and shall not the Judge of all the Earth visit for these Things? And what if the amazing Threatnings, mentioned *Isa. vi. 9, 10, 11, 12.* have already taken Place upon us, our most eminent and lively *Gospel Ministers* having a Commission to preach Hearers deaf, blind and hardened, until our Cities be laid waste without Inhabitant, our Houses without Men, and our Land be utterly desolate? And, *finally*, Are we not a Kingdom, in which both sacred and civil

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Persons are divided, and can we stand ? Hence

Our *second Cry* is very loud. Have not our Divisions ruined us in former Times ? Does not the Scripture warn us, that if we bite and devour one another, we are in Danger of being consumed one of another ? And does not History confirm this ? We, poor *Countrymen*, have neither Time nor Capacity to search far into ancient Histories ; but we well know what Hindrance this was to the Establishment of Presbytery in *England*, betwixt 1640 and 1660. what Trouble they gave to our late *Westminster Assembly* ; what empty Churches Divisions made to the most eminent and shining *Ministers* in that Land ; and what Harm, yea Danger, these brought to a *dissenting Interest* there at our late remarkable *Revolution*. And if we look to our own Church, did not our Divisions, into publick and private *Resolutioners*, ruin us ? For what was then to be seen, but *Ministers* suspending and deposing one another ? And some of us, who are now old and gray-headed, with Grief remember, that these followed us to the Fields, where, with Peril of our Lives, we went from one Desert to another, and were obliged to seek Safety in Mountains, Caves, Woods and Rocks ; yet all these did not unite us ; and what fearful Lengths some of our Dividers were carried into, (for when once Men begin to divide from a pure Church, who knows how far they may go) we forbear to mention. Is it not also certain, that Religion, in the Life and Power of it, greatly suffers by Divisions, for it is a great Truth, where there is most Holiness there always is most Peace ;
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and where Envy and Strife is, there is Confusion and every evil Work; nor can it be otherwise, when we observe the Attendants and Consequences of Divisions; and here these frightful, and to us ruining Things, appear; such as partying and plotting one against another. Hence the most manifest Partiality, every one setting up for the Man of his Party, no Matter if with Rule or Reason, or against these. These who were formerly chief Friends, now separated, and becoming cold one to another, not on the Head of plain Principle, Sin or Duty, but upon a very doubtful Point, and their different Actings in some circumstantiate Cases; and this carried to that Height, that they refuse to join in compleat Christian Communion one with another, and those *Ministers*, whom formerly they could not want as their Assistants at Sacramental Administrations, must no more be invited; and hence we the poor People divide and crumble into Parties; and, in this Case, you may be sure, the most gross Ignorance is discovered; the most absurd Conclusions are asserted, and *Ministers* not spared. 'Tis now the great Things of the Gospel are no more to be heard amongst us, now our edifying Fellowship Meetings are broken up, and now these great, good, learned and prudent Men, who are at the Helm, must by all Means be run down; yea, those whom once we reckoned a Blessing to hear, be vilified. How then can our Spirits but be quite disordered, and a praying Frame be far from us? yea, alas, alas! what Sin is committed? We cannot then but cry. Hence,

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3dly. Pardon us, *Reverend Sir*, to say, That our oppressing Grief is so great, and our secret Groans so heavy, that they must have Vent; for some of us have suffered for our Adherence to our Protestant, Presbyterian and Covenanted Constitution, and think we would not yet regard our Lives in maintaining and owning of these, and a Protestant Succession to our Throne, in the Royal Family of our present and only lawful Sovereign King *George*; yet how can we but cry, when we observe the Methods that are taken to maintain and increase our Divisions; and here it may be we shall be too plain, but we speak Things we know, and have certain Information of. Here then, bold asserting of Things as Scripture Truth, and Christ's Legacy, which the sober Enquirer cannot find to be so. Hence these Pamphlets, some of which we have seen, must have a great many Quotations of Scripture in them, and we, poor People, if we but see these, we ask no further, tho', in the mean Time, they are nothing to the Purpose. Hence Clamour must be raised against, and bad Names given to these Ministers, who will not think, speak and act as they would. Yea, is it so, that some Ministers about *Forth*, make no Scruple to baptize Children who are brought to them from other Congregations; and can it be true, that even the Children of some Parents, who are known to be scandalous, and all this without the least acknowledging the Ministers of these Parishes. And then, *Sir*, in electing Members to your ensuing *General Assembly*, we understand the Method, in too many Places, is, the learned, old, experienced, sober-

sober-minded, and such as are hearty Friends to the Preservation of our Constitution, and therefore earnestly with a good Understanding betwixt Kirk and Court, these must be passed by and laid aside, yea, Year after Year, even tho' it comes to their Turn to be chosen; and the young, un-experienc'd, but warm, these must be fixed on; and therefore, we Country Elders who are easily imposed upon by specious Pretences, must all be brought up against the Day of Election, taught our Lesson, and then the Job is done. And as to the Elder or Elders, that are sent Members to the *Assembly*, those Nobility or Gentry, who are known to be Persons of Knowledge, Influence, and steady Affection to our Interest in our Church and State, those also, tho' named, must be overlooked, and such who are not so well qualified, must, in several Places, be chosen. Nor is it in this Instance only, that Nobility and Gentry, who are our best Friends, are disregarded and disoblighd, but in other Matters also that concern them, which come before Church Judicatories; and we have heard some of our worthy Ministers say, That the late famous Historian, Bishop *Burnet*, in his late History, notices three Things which overturned Presbytery in our late Times, *to wit*, our pushing Things with too much Violence; our disregarding and disoblighing Nobility and Gentry; and then our Divisions among ourselves; which, says he, Papists and Prelatists secretly, but with great Industry, fomented. Hence,

4thly. Who warm their Hands at the Fire, while you yourselves blow it up? Who run away

way with the Prize, while you are contending and disputing one with another? And do not *Satan* and *Rome* secretly foment, and rejoice at your Divisions, that hereby you may be diverted from more necessary Work, such as, opposing Error, like Ministers of Christ, and Members of his mystical Body, exciting and encouraging one another in the Lord's Work; and therefore consulting with one another how to carry on the great Ends of the Gospel, and to guard and warn us, poor People, against the Activity and Influence of trafficking Jesuits, who, we hear, are now in Abundance amongst us. *Tell it not in Gath*, that while, in our Neighbour Nation, both Churchmen and Dissenters are joining together in a stated preaching against Popery, and disputing with Papists, yet the Church of *Scotland*, who was once famous, we may say, above all others, for her Zeal against Popery, should now be asleep, and, in Room of opposing the common Enemy, should be strengthening their Hands, by contending one with another, about Things wherein this Church, yea, the *Westminster Assembly* itself, could never come to any positive or fixed Conclusion. *Very Reverend*, Are not substantial Errors abounding? Is not Religion, in the Life and Power of it, decaying? Do not we People need to have our Covenants explained to us, and put in Mind of our Obligations to hold by them? And are not the Eyes of every true Protestant and honest Presbyterian upon this ensuing Assembly? And, above all, does not our Lord and his Apostles, by the strongest Arguments, call us to Unity; and therefore to forbear and forgive one another? And finally,

nally, are not we People to be warned, lest we be led away with the Errors of the Wicked; what then are we doing? But we must forbear, and leave these our poor Country Hints before you. Only we beg your Patience, while we name to you two Passages, the first whereof makes us fear, and the last greatly affected us. At a Meeting of some of our Ministers, where some of our Preachers were with them, we heard them discourse of the Cunning of Jesuits to overturn a Protestant Interest, and therefore to raise and increase Divisions; of which they gave this particular Instance, that, in our late Times in England, the Jesuitical Party turned themselves into all Shapes, and whatever Side they espoused, they were all Flame for it, and all Fury against others, until that Church was broken into Pieces: And we well remember of a *Sermon* preached at *Bothwel*, which was full of Heat, and had the most mournful Consequences: And is it not certain Fact, that in the last Times of Presbytery, some who were the most zealous Pressers of our Covenants, became afterwards the most violent and bloody Persecutors. These Things, we know, make honest Ministers, with us, fear, and cannot but put us People upon our Guard. But what greatly affected us, was a Story they told, we think it was from the Life of one *Philip Henry*, whom they highly commended, it was, *That he, who was in his Judgment Presbyterian, others who were Episcopal, and a third Sort who were of the Congregational Way, met together, laid down this as an inviolable Article, that they should not so much as mention these Things wherein they differed,*

ferred, but entred into a solemn Concert, that they would unite their Endeavours in preaching and commending Christ, and the Doctrine of Grace, to Heavens; in advancing true Holiness and winning of Souls. At this we could scarce forbear weeping, not that we have any liking to Prelates, and indeed we have no Cause, nor that we have any Bias to the Independent Way, but, to see so much of Christ and a Gospel Temper in Men of different Opinions. It put us in Mind of our Apostles great Exhortation, That, so far as we are agreed, we should walk by the same Rule, and mind the same Things, believing and hoping, that if in any Thing others were otherwise minded, God would reveal it to them in due Time. Now, Sir, shall we, who all own the same Confession of Faith, the same Worship, Presbyterian Government and Discipline, to the Detriment, yea, to the Danger of overturning all, divide and crumble into Parties, and at last into Pieces, about the Application of some of these Principles. And indeed we cannot but lament, that the Fire which threatens to consume the whole Church, comes forth first from the Altar, or you Ministers; and we poor People plainly say, that if the Ministers would agree, we would very soon be at one. But from all we have said,

5thly. We cannot cry, and earnestly long for the Day, when all petty Differences being laid aside, we shall every one of us, for ourselves, confess, mourn over our Sins, and in Christ return to the Lord. And tho' very Reverend, we are no Preachers, yet, if our Apostle enjoined Christians to say to Archippus, Take Heed to thy Ministry,
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that thou fulfil it, may not we who desire to be among the Friends of the great Master, tho' at present Mourners, say to you, our Ministers, that the Lord is crying to you and us, to search and try our Ways, and turn again to the Lord, and to lift up our Hearts with our Hands to God in the Heavens. No good Man will doubt but all have sinned; no Question but there are Faults with all Ranks, yea, both Sides, (alas for this last Word) and should it please the Lord to pour out a Spirit of Conviction on us, with what Sincerity and Readiness would we confess our Faults, first to the great God, and then to one another? If, in the Gospel Way, we were turning to the Lord, with what Joy would we embrace and forgive one another? How would we lay our present Disputes aside, at least, how would we in Love, and with all Openness, without mistaking one another, far less misrepresenting them to others, in Meekness, Humility, and Willingness to receive Light, endeavour to inform one another, and set them right wherein they are wrong, and so, by the Grace of God, and the Influence of his purchased and promised Spirit, come to be one in the Lord. We read of a Day appointed for this in the Year 1596. and attended with Power: And we wish somewhat like that Acknowledgment of Sins, and Engagement to Duties, which is annexed to our *Covenants* and *Confession of Faith*. We presume not to offer Arguments to you, our Teachers, urging this our Cry; but our *Bibles* inform us, that God hath promised the greatest Blessings to follow such Exercises. How then would this Church be *beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem*,

lem, and terrible as an Army with Banners? And we are sure we, poor Countrymen, some of us at least, who are now waiting for our last Change, would say, *Now let thy Servants depart in Peace, for our Eyes have seen thy Salvation.* 'Tis true, we have our Fasts sometimes; but alas! in Place of tending to Unity, they rather increase Strife; they are not employed in humbling ourselves before the Lord, in flying to Christ, and in returning to the Most High, but in Clamour against our Brethren: And, in too many Places, People are not taken up with the great and necessary Works of such Days, but in noticing Things that have a Tendency to exasperate against Christ's Ministers, Judicatories, Church and State. And if the good Man shall have his Soul elevated above these Things, and therefore minds them not, but is taken up with the great Business of the Day, he is sure to be severely censured by some, as lukewarm, lax, and what not. Here is our Grief, and good Ground for a Cry, and such as we have heard some of our best Ministers say, *The Time was, when Fast-Days were a Pleasure, but now they were become a Terror to them:* For now they could not evite either to disoblige their Consciences or their People; Hearers now setting up as Dictators to their Ministers; tho', in our distant Country, these Things have not taken Place so much as we hear they have elsewhere. But to return, we have heard it proposed, that, in the Management of such a Diet of Humiliation, Charity and Prudence should be used, in forbearing such Things as are now Matter of Controversy; yet still, in humbling themselves be-
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fore the Lord, particularly that these Disputes have been managed with so little of brotherly Charity and Love. And if, by the Lord's Blessing, this could take at our next Assembly, how pleasantly would it spread into other inferior Judicatories, and so into all Corners of the Land. And it would be our Joy, would some propose to delay all Overtures about settling Congregations, wherein we have Reason to think you will be so far from agreeing, that your precious Time will be lost, which you might well employ to infinitely better Purposes, until you do somewhat to Purpose with Reference to Popery, which so prevails, and the reviving Unity and Religion; in its Life and Power, and as you are sure to have our Prayers, so, we hope, you shall be so guided of God, as for you we shall have good Cause to offer up our Praises.

Very Reverend,

As a Conclusion to this our plain and very short Cry, we cannot but tell you, that last Year we said, that we looked upon Patronages as a great Burden to this Church, and we still do so; tho' we cannot think the Arguments against these, which some use, so convincing; for we are sure, that a Father makes Choice of a Physician and Tutor also for his Children, and certainly he is more fit to do so than they for themselves; so that we still think the Ministers of a Presbytery, who are Fathers, the only proper Persons, who should make Choice of a Minister to a Congregation, yet still endeavouring to have
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the Consent of the well affected Gentry, the Elders, and such Heads of Families, as are known to be sober and judicious, at least the Plurality of them. Yet, at a Meeting of the Kind above mentioned, we heard this Question proposed, Were not Patronages abjured by our Covenants, and was People their choosing their own Ministers a covenanted Principle? The Difficulty in this was, if it is so, why then did our *Assemblies* 1642 and 1643, so far condescend to them, as to offer a Let to the Patron's Choice, when they had but just then sworn the National Covenant. This neither the Ministers, so far as we could observe, much less we, could answer. And if you think it is so, pity a Handful of poor *Countrymen*, so far as to point at the Place in any of the two Covenants, where these are to be found. For we are sure, that the National Covenant was sworn but a little before these Acts were made, and we hope none will be so uncharitable to say, these *Assemblies* deliberately perjured themselves. And as to the Solemn League, we are as sure it was sworn while Patronages were not abolished. And what increases our Difficulty, is, you may easily think that some of us want not the Book, called *The Causes of God's Wrath*. But, in that, when Mention is made of the Corruptions in entering into the Ministry, there is not, in our Copy, one Word of Patronages, nor of People their *electing* their own Ministers. And while we speak of the forenamed *Acts of Assembly*, we much want to know what they meant by *the better Part of the Congregation*, whose Consent they required, in

in order to make up a Leet to be presented to the Patron. We still observe Things have been, and yet are kept in Generals, for Particulars were too delicate, or rather intricate, to be condescended on. But our poor Thoughts of this, you had in our last Year's Cry.

After we had finished this our Cry, we were much surprised to find, that tho' our Cry last Year was to the *Moderator* of the *General Assembly*, yet another takes it upon him to answer it, and make Observes on it.

We poor *Countrymen* are not Match for one who seems to be learned, if the many Books he names be an Evidence that he is so, yet if you will allow us to have but a very small Stock of common *Country Sense*, we think it would be no great Difficulty to remark upon his Remarks, and observe upon his Observations. But, to our Grief, we hear of too much contending and disputing already, and therefore we forbear. Yet this we cannot but add, that whoever hath been the Author of these Observes, we forgive him, we pity him.

F I N I S.
